

SV 2019

P PRESTIGE
SWINGVILLE

good 'n' groovy
JOE NEWMAN
with Frank Foster



GOOD 'N' GROOVY

JOE NEWMAN QUINTET

JOE NEWMAN, trumpet
FRANK FOSTER, tenor sax
TOMMY FLANAGAN, piano
EDDIE JONES, bass
BILLY ENGLISH, drums

Side A

1. **A. M. ROMP**
2. **LI'L DARLIN'**
3. **MO-LASSES**

Side B

1. **TO RIGMOR**
2. **JUST SQUEEZE ME**
3. **LOOP-D-LOOP**

No-one has ever successfully defined the word swing, but most people do know what it means when applied to a particular style of music. They think of a style which came up in the thirties, and had its closest connection with the bands led by Count Basie. Even though Joe Newman played trumpet with Basie for over ten years, and this record is being released on Swingville, the term is still not a completely accurate description of the way he plays.

He is, actually, one of the very best of the musicians who form a musical bridge between the strict swing style and the modernists. While he can at times be reminiscent of Basie giants like Buck Clayton, he can, at other times, be as contemporary as Miles Davis. On this album, the similarity is most noticeable on **Just Squeeze Me**, which Davis has also recorded.

Like so many other musicians who are, in the best sense, professionals as well as talents, Newman sets great store by a man's ability to play different styles. "That's the mark of a musician," he says. "Tommy Flanagan can do that. He's a marvelous piano player." And speaking of Frank Foster, with whom he was in the Basie band for several years, and for whom he has enormous respect, he says, "Frank can play like Coleman Hawkins, Ben Webster, 'Lockjaw' Davis, and several other guys if he wants to, but you don't know it from hearing him in the band. I don't even think Basie knows it." The ability to play with anyone would by now be second nature to Billy English, who was, for four years, the drummer in the house band at New York's Apollo Theatre, an experience he treasures for the opportunity to play so much different music, as well as being there to see and hear the great musicians who have played the theatre.

But Newman is no longer with Basie, and Billy English is no longer at the Apollo. In January of this year, Joe left Basie to form his own quintet, and Billy was one of the musicians Joe asked to join him. For

this recording, made during the formative stages of his group, he used Frank Foster and Eddie Jones, two Basie associates, Billy English, and Tommy Flanagan.

Joe had thought of forming a group for a long time before he did, and for awhile was deterred by the inevitable problems that go with being a leader, but musical considerations finally outweighed the others. He feels, for instance, that it is impossible for a musician to play all tunes equally well, and the possibility to a good performance is more likely if he himself is picking the tunes. And there is another factor: "If you're playing riffs behind a soloist in a big band, it's written out, and you might not be playing what you feel. What I play behind Frank Foster on **Mo-Lasses**, for instance, was what I felt at that moment." The section he speaks of, by the way, has all the power of a big band, as does the opening of **A. M. Romp**, and Joe feels that this feeling has been achieved by careful spacing of harmonics. "If you have just two horns, and they're either too far apart or too closer together, it doesn't sound good." And he feels that even in a small group like his, orchestration is a much more important part of arranging than most people give it credit for being. "Gil Evans is the master of orchestration, and Quincy Jones. A lot of people wonder why Quincy has a nineteen piece band, but if he feels it that way, if he needs that many men, he should have it."

Joe himself can be a composer of consequence, as evidenced by his four originals on this record. **A. M. Romp**, written several years ago, is so titled because it occurred to him early in the morning. **Mo-Lasses**, which Billy English and Joe consider the high point of the album, and which contains an exceptionally powerful Frank Foster solo, was made up on the spot in the studio. **Loop-D-Loop** is, as you can hear, based on the melody of an old nursery rhyme. **To Rigmor**, at the time of this recording, was nothing more than an untitled chord sequence which Joe planned to improvise on. He was so pleased with the result that he decided to dedicate it to his lovely Swedish wife, hence the title.

The other standard, aside from **Just Squeeze Me**, is **Li'l Darlin'**, which Neal Hefti wrote for the Basie band. Even though it was not a feature number for Newman in its original form, he has received so many requests for the tune with his own group that he decided to record it. In one club, he recalls, "all they wanted to hear was **Li'l Darlin'**, over and over."

Newman's reaction to his own album can best be summed up by his own comment after hearing it: "If this one doesn't make it, I'll quit." And then, thinking about it some more, "When you work with musicians as wonderful as these guys, you get so many ideas that if your chops are up the big danger is that you'll overplay."

The afternoon that Joe Newman heard the advance copy of this record, he was in the middle of painting his apartment, a task which was put aside without much reluctance. Billy English was there, and so were Joe's wife, Rigmor, and their two-year-old son, Fredrik. Fredrik is as yet unable to make himself clearly understood except to his parents, but understands both Swedish and English, which both his parents speak to him interchangeably. He seems to regard his father as the biggest toy in the house, and spends most of his time riding on Joe's knee or hitting him. After one particularly furious assault, Joe said, "He hits rather hard, you know. If he ever reaches the chops, that's it."

Fredrik is fascinated by his father's trumpet, which he plays whenever he can. "He can't play anything, of course," Joe says, "but he gets a good sound."

Joe, who met his wife while on a European tour with the Basie band in 1954, has a lasting affection for Europe, and hopes to move there someday. Perhaps that affection, and his wife, are the underlying reasons for a comment in Leonard Feather's **Encyclopedia of Jazz**: "Rejoined Basie Jan. 1952 and has been with him continuously, though in Oct. 1958, while the band was on vacation, he led a sextet of Basie men that played a brief European tour."

At any rate, whatever his motives might have been for that trip, he has, at present, the vision of what he calls a "jazz restaurant" in Europe, where he would live and play. But in the meantime, he is still here, and is a valuable addition to the scene. If he goes, Europe's gain will be our loss.

There is no need to go into any sort of dull, detailed explanation of the music on this album. It is a notable example of the kind of music that makes its points for itself, and needs no assistance from anyone — that is part of the reason why Joe Newman is so good. But I do recall something Barbara Gardner said in **Down Beat** about a previous Newman record: "Keeping albums marking the beginnings and ends of eras? Put this one someplace to indicate the time when dynamic, progressive Basieites seemed ready to pass into that obscure realm called good mainstream." There are three "dynamic, progressive Basieites" on this record, and they and their two associates are playing **excellent** mainstream. But one of Joe Newman's main purposes, and it is a purpose which coincides with the basic premise of the Swingville label, is that such music will never inhabit anything remotely resembling an "obscure realm". As long as there are talents like Joe Newman's around (as George Frazier might have said, and Barbara me no Gardners) there is little likelihood that that will ever happen.

Notes: Joe Goldberg
 Supervision: Esmond Edwards
 Recording: Rudy Van Gelder
 Recorded March 17, 1961

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GOOD AND GROOVY
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SVLP 2019 A

LONG PLAYING
MICROGROOVE

1. A.M. ROMP
(Joe Newman)
2. LI'L DARLIN'
(Neil Hefti)
3. MO-LASSES
(Joe Newman)

HIGH FIDELITY

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GOOD AND GROOVY
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SVLP 2019 B

LONG PLAYING
MICROGROOVE

1. TO' RIGMOR
(Joe Newman)
2. JUST SQUEEZE ME
(Gaines and Ellington)
3. LOOP-D-LOOP
(Joe Newman)

HIGH FIDELITY